

Message Text

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53
ACTION EUR-12

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE THESSALONIKI 0499

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TAGS: ECEM, SENV, PGOV, ELAB, GR
SUBJECT: ETHYL-HELLAS CLOSES THESSALONIKI PLANT

REF: THESSALONIKI 0488

1. SUMMARY: ETHYL-HELLAS CLOSED ITS THESSALONIKI PLANT
MIDNIGHT AUG 17 IN REACTION TO AUGUST 14 DECISION BY
ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL OF THESSALONIKI PORT ORGANIZATION
TO PROHIBIT ETHYL'S CONTINUED USE OF ITS STORAGE
FACILITIES IN THESSALONIKI PORT. ADMIN COUNCIL MAINTAINS
ITS DECISION BASED ONLY ON HIGH READINGS OF LEAD
EMISSIONS INTO ATMOSPHERE IN VICINITY OF ETHYL FACILITIES,
AND THAT IT WAS NOT INFLUENCED BY PROTESTS OF WORKERS.
HOWEVER, PORT WAS SHUT DOWN AUGUST 14 WHEN WORKERS
WALKED OFF JOBS IN PROTEST OF ALLEGED ATMOSPHERIC
POLLUTION. AS OF AUGUST 18 ALL PORT WORKERS WITH
EXCEPTION OF STEVEDORES WHO WORK IN HOLDS OF GENERAL
CARGO SHIPS ARE BACK ON JOB. PIER WITH ETHYL FACILITIES
ANDIQART OF ADJOINING PIER REMAIN CLOSED. END SUMMARY.

2. THESSALONIKI PORT WORKERS WALKED OFF JOB AND
EFFECTIVELY SHUT PORT AUGUST 14, PROTESTING HIGH LEVELS
OF LEAD ATMOSPHERIC POLLUTION REPORTED BY THESSALONIKI
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UNIVERSITY TEAM WHICH IS MONITORING EMISSIONS FROM
ETHYL-HELLAS STORAGE TANKS AND LOADING FACILITIES. WORKERS
DEMANDED THESE FACILITIES BE CLOSED DOWN AND REFUSED
TO RETURN TO WORK UNTIL ACTION TAKEN TO CORRECT ALLEGED

POLLUTION PROBLEM. THESSALONIKI PORT AUTHORITIES DECIDED EVENING AUGUST 14 THAT ETHYL SHOULD CEASE OPERATIONS IN PORT AREA AND THAT STORAGE TANKS SHOULD BE EMPTIED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. IN STATEMENT ANNOUNCING DECISION, PORT AUTHORITIES MAINTAIN IT TAKEN INDEPENDENTLY OF WORKERS' ACTION AND BASED ON UNIVERSITY TEAM FINDINGS.

3. ACCORDING TO ETHYL-HELLAS MANAGING DIRECTOR EMMANUEL AMOLOCHITES, UNUSUALLY HIGH EMISSIONS REPORTED BY UNIVERSITY TEAM ARE RESULT OF ONE-TIME MEASUREMENT AND DO NOT GIVE TRUE PICTURE OF EMISSIONS AT ETHYL FACILITIES. HE ALSO SUGGESTED UNIVERSITY MONITORING DEVICES MIGHT BE DEFECTIVE. COMPANY MAINTAINS THAT ITS OWN DEVICES WHICH RECORD EMISSIONS ON CONTINUING BASIS DID NOT REGISTER ANY DANGEROUS LEVELS OF AIR POLLUTION. NEVERTHELESS, AMOLOCHITES SAID THAT, IN VIEW OF PORT'S DECISION, ETHYL HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO CLOSE PLANT. HE DID NOT KNOW WHEN PLANT WOULD REOPEN AND ETHYL LAWYERS ARE NOW EXPLORING WHAT LEGAL RECOURSE, IF ANY, EXISTS.

4. ETHYL'S DECISION ANNOUNCED IN STATEMENT PRINTED IN MAJOR THESSALONIKI PAPERS AUGUST 17. COMPANY DENIED EMITTING HAZARDOUS LEVELS OF LEAD AND SAID IN VIEW OF LOSS OF ITS STORAGE AND LOADING FACILITIES IT WAS CLOSING THESSALONIKI PLANT. STATEMENT STRESSES THAT PORT AUTHORITIES KNEW PLANT WOULD BE FORCED TO CLOSE IF ETHYL DENIED USE OF THESSALONIKI PORT.

5. WITH SHUT DOWN ETHYL'S PORT FACILITIES, WORKERS ARE BACK ON JOB, WITH EXCEPTION OF THOSE WHO WORK IN HOLDS OF GENERAL CARGO SHIPS, WHOSE INTENTIONS CURRENTLY UNCERTAIN. BACKLOG OF SHIPS BUILT UP IN THESSALONIKI HARBOR DURING LAST THREE DAYS APPEARS TO BE GRADUALLY CLEARING OUT.

6. BULK OF ETHYL EMPLOYEES (APPROX 300) WILL LIKELY BE LAID OFF AND ARE REPORTEDLY ALREADY CONTACTING UNION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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LABOR CENTERS AND GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT OFFICES FOR NEW JOBS.

7. IN A RELATED ACTION, THESSALONIKI DISTRICT ATTORNEY HAS ANNOUNCED HE WILL CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION TO SEE IF THERE HAVE BEEN ANY LAW VIOLATIONS BY ETHYL.

8. WE WILL REPORT FUTURE SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS AS THEY OCCUR. COPIES OF ETHYL-HELLAS AND PORT AUTHORITY STATEMENTS BEING POUCED.

9. COMMENT: AS STATED REFTEL, ISSUE IS ONE OF SOME

STANDING, WITH POLITICAL OVERTONES IN CURRENT ATMOSPHERE.
MINISTER OF NORTHERN GREECE MARTIS, WHO HAS TAKEN ACTIVE
PERSONAL INTEREST IN PROBLEM, IS YET TO BE HEARD FROM
ON THIS LATEST DEVELOPMENT. AT HIS SPECIFIC BEHEST, TWO
ETHYL OFFICIALS (WHITLOCK AND SPEARMAN) VISITED
THESSALONIKI AND ATHENS JUNE 17 TO 24 IN MOST RECENT
EFFORT TO FORMULATE SOLUTION WITH GOG MINISTRIES
CONCERNED. ETHYL PLANT CLOSURE HAS IMPLICATIONS FOR
OTHER INDUSTRIES IN AREA WHICH DEPEND UPON IT FOR
PRODUCT SUPPLY, SUCH AS PECHINEY-SUPPORTED CHEMICAL
INDUSTRIES OF NORTHERN GREECE AND ESSO-PAPPAS' CHEMICAL
MANUFACTURING BRANCH.

BRENNAN

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